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State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council Finalizes 2015 Legislative Agenda

The State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council (SIYAC) finalized its legislative agenda during a teleconference on January 4, 2015. This year, the Council has three priority areas: education, health, and human rights. The Council will advocate for the following issues during the 2015 legislative session:

High School Dropout Age Increase – revise Iowa Code 299.1A to increase Iowa's legal school dropout age from the current 16 to 18 to empower students to stay in school, graduate, and positively change their futures.

Student Evaluation Reform – reform the measurement and calculation of scores on standardized tests in Iowa using the statistical evaluative mechanism called Individual Yearly Improvement in order to calculate Adequate Yearly Progression.

Tanning Restrictions for Minors – ban youth under the age of 18 from using tanning facilities that emit ultraviolet radiation, and increase posted warnings about the dangers of tanning throughout the facilities.

Suicide Prevention Training – require teachers to receive suicide prevention and trauma-informed care training to obtain or renew their license.

Cyberbullying Prevention – add the definition of cyberbullying to Iowa Code section 280.28, require teachers to complete approved training to obtain or renew their license, require school personnel to give prompt notification to parents or guardians of students involved in bullying incidents, and give schools clear authority to address bullying incidents that occur off school grounds, such as those in cyberspace, if they affect the school environment.

Conversion Therapy Ban – protect minors in Iowa from mental health practitioners violating a youth's basic human rights by attempting to change their sexuality or gender identity through psychological or physical means.

Human Trafficking – enhance the treatment of human trafficking survivors by providing them with the necessary treatment to live a healthy and safe lifestyle outside the realm of human trafficking, rather than criminalizing them for enduring a horrific act of injustice against their will.

‘Yes Means Yes’ – In partnership with our sister organization Iowa Youth Congress, we will advocate for the implementation of legislation aimed at reducing sexual assaults on college campuses in Iowa by defining consent as *active*, rather than *implied*, and withdraw educational licensing from institutions violating this policy.

SIYAC is the state’s sole youth-led council, outlined in Iowa Code section 216A.140.8, and is comprised of 21 youth members ages 14 – 21 from across Iowa. SIYAC members forge partnerships with state-level agencies, talk with legislators at the Capitol about proposed bills, and develop state-wide service initiatives. The Council meets quarterly at the State Capitol, as well as biweekly through conference calls.

SIYAC is part of the Iowa Department of Human Rights, whose mission is to ensure basic rights, freedoms and opportunities for all by empowering underrepresented Iowans and eliminating economic, social and cultural barriers.

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